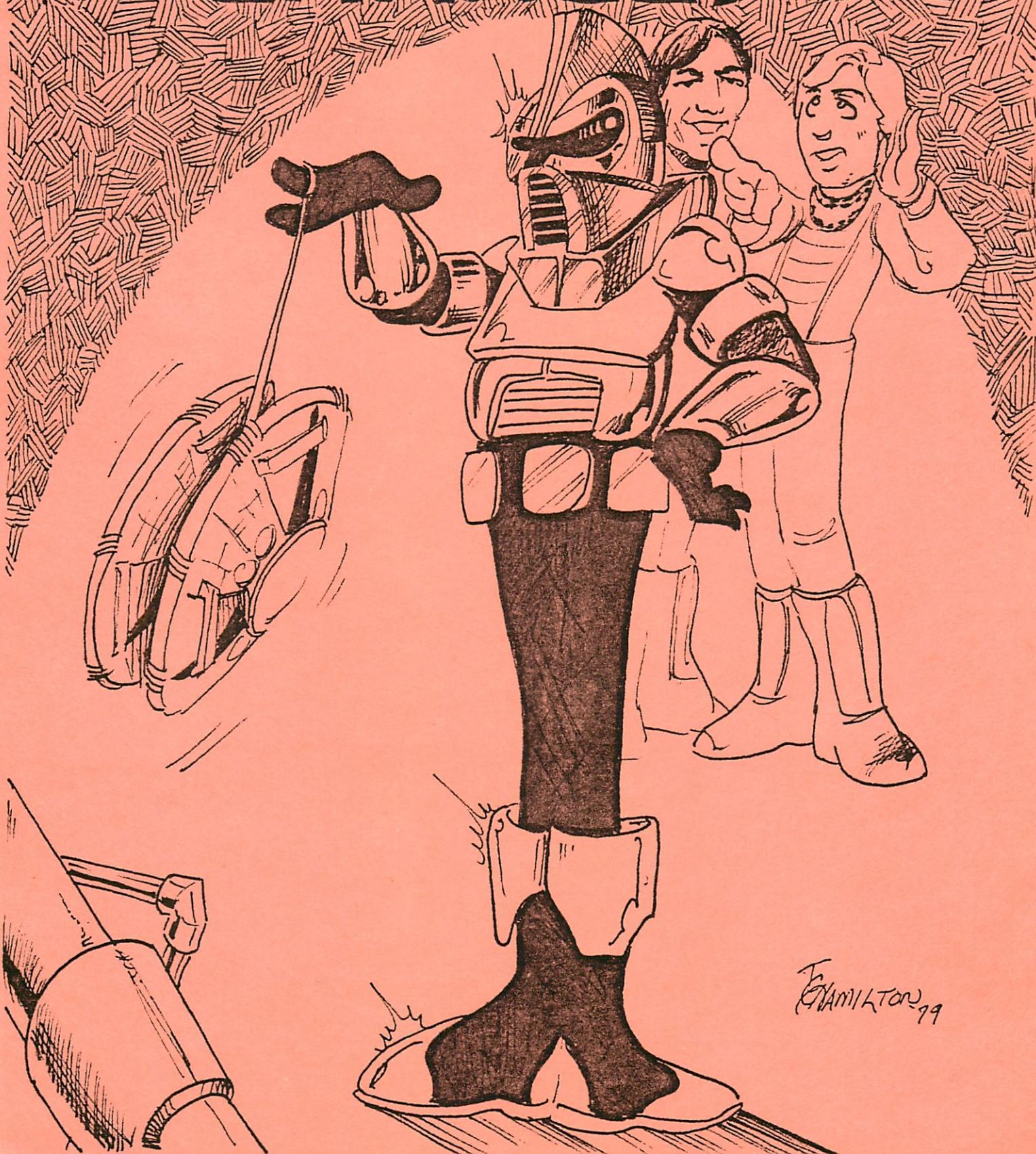


PURPLE  
ORANGE?



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"Purple and Orange" is intended solely for the enjoyment of fans of the ABC-TV series BATTLESTAR GALACTICA and is the official publication of Battlestar OSIRIS, c/o The New Fantasy Shop, 5651 West Belmont Avenue, Chicago, Illinois 60634.

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## EPISODE GUIDE

The following is a list of all episodes of BATTLESTAR GALACTICA as of 8/31/79.

9/17/78	"Battlestar GALACTICA"	2/25/79	"Greetings from Earth"
9/24/78	"Lost Planet of the Gods" (Part I)	3/11/79	"Baltar's Escape"
10/01/78	"Lost Planet of the Gods" (Part II)	3/18/79	"Experiment in Terra"
10/08/78	"The Lost Warrior"	4/01/79	"Take the CELESTRA"
10/15/78	"The Long Patrol"	4/08/79	"Fire in Space" - repeat
10/22/78	"The Gun on Ice Planet Zero" (Part I)	4/29/79	"The Hand of God"
10/29/78	"The Gun on Ice Planet Zero" (Part II)	6/02/79	"The Living Legend" (Part I) - repeat
11/12/78	"The Magnificent Warriors"	6/09/79	"The Living Legend" (Part II) - repeat
11/19/78	"The Young Lords"	6/16/79	"The Young Lords" - repeat
11/26/78	"The Living Legend" (Part I)	6/23/79	"The Long Patrol" - repeat
12/03/78	"The Living Legend" (Part II)	7/07/79	"The Gun on Ice Planet Zero" (Part I) - repeat
12/17/78	"Fire in Space"	7/14/79	"The Gun on Ice Planet Zero" (Part II) - repeat
12/24/78	"Lost Planet of the Gods" (Part I) - repeat	7/21/79	"War of the Gods" (Part I) - repeat
12/31/78	"Lost Planet of the Gods" (Part II) - repeat	7/28/79	"War of the Gods" (Part II) - repeat
1/14/79	"War of the Gods" (Part I)	8/04/79	"The Man with Nine Lives" - repeat*
1/21/79	"War of the Gods" (Part II)		
1/28/79	"The Man with Nine Lives"		
2/18/79	"Murder on the RISING STAR"		

\*Preempted in the Chicago metropolitan area by local ABC affiliate WLS-TV, Channel 7.

## COLONEL LYRA'S LOG

## Entry #5

More than three sectors have passed since we first entered what should have been home space. We have spent a great deal of time dodging Cylons. Our pilots are on constant alert, and fatigue is becoming a common problem. The OSIRIS is outfitted for exploration, and therefore has capacity for vast amounts of fuel. But even our supplies are not inexhaustable. We were, after all, headed toward home; and we now carry almost no reserves.

Commander Christopher poured over records in an attempt to find a source of tylium. Our need for fuel is critical, especially if we are to chase the GALACTICA across the galaxy. After centars of study, he decided to seek out the planet Carillon. Small, somewhat off the beaten track, the abandoned mining operation there should be sufficient to meet our needs.

Our executive officer, Colonel Tyr, laid out reconnaissance plans that put Purple Squadron in the vanguard. They were to keep us clear of Cylons, if possible. The first reports from our scouts indicated everything proceeding normally. No Cylons appeared, and the Nova of Madagon was as stable as it ever can be.

As Flight Leader for both Purple and Orange Squadrons, I was at Tyr's side when the tone of the reports began to change. Captain Diana, one of our most experienced and valuable pilots, was leading Purple Squadron this run. Normally very calm, to the point that some of her junior officers claim she has icewater in her veins, an edge of disbelief crept into her voice.

It was disconcerting to be standing on the bridge instead of being with the patrol, but even colonels need rest. I have since rejoiced that I was not on that patrol. Colonel Tyr's response to Diana's report that Carillon was nowhere to be found sizzled com links all through that sector of space.

At first, instrument failure was suspected as the reason our pilots couldn't find Carillon. As circuits were checked and re-checked, however, another possibility was thrust upon us. Our pilots had been driven beyond fatigue to the verge of collapse. Was the fault with the pilots and not with the instruments?

It was Captain Diana's persistence that finally convinced Colonel Tyr and myself that we had neither a malfunction of pilots nor of guidance. The planet Carillon has ceased to exist. We must search elsewhere for tylium. I hope we find it before the Cylons find us -- again.

I wonder if the GALACTICA was involved in the disappearance of Carillon.

"Aquarius"

(By Antea)

When Starbuck's scanners picked up six Cylons on his tail, he figured he'd bought it. When they blew away his high engine and part of his undercarriage, he knew it was time to cash in his chips. Why those frakkin' machines peeled off and let him be, Starbuck would never know; but he almost wished they'd finished the job. Sparks were shooting out of his control panel like a Gemonese fireworks display; his scanners were inoperative; he didn't think his com was working; and he discovered the final touch -- he had almost no control over his Viper. He tried a bank to the left; no response. He tried a bank to the right. The Viper turned, but bucked and shook like a Nomen beast of burden.

"Great! I can go anywhere I want, as long as it's straight ahead." Oh, well. He couldn't go home to the GALACTICA anyway, because without instruments he had no way of knowing where she was. At least that narrowed his choices. He could either fly straight ahead or make a huge circle to the right and risk shaking his ship the rest of the way apart. Starbuck opted for straight ahead. He slowed his remaining two engines. He was not in a hurry to get to nowhere; and if his distress signal was working, he didn't want to be running from the only help he was likely to get.

As he coasted through clear space, Starbuck took the time to look around. This was a beautiful part of the universe, even if it was awfully lonely with no one to share it with. Starbuck swore by all that was holy he would never volunteer for another mission where he would be alone -- at least, not until the next time someone asked for a volunteer and offered a big enough reward. That assumed, of course, he would be around the next time.

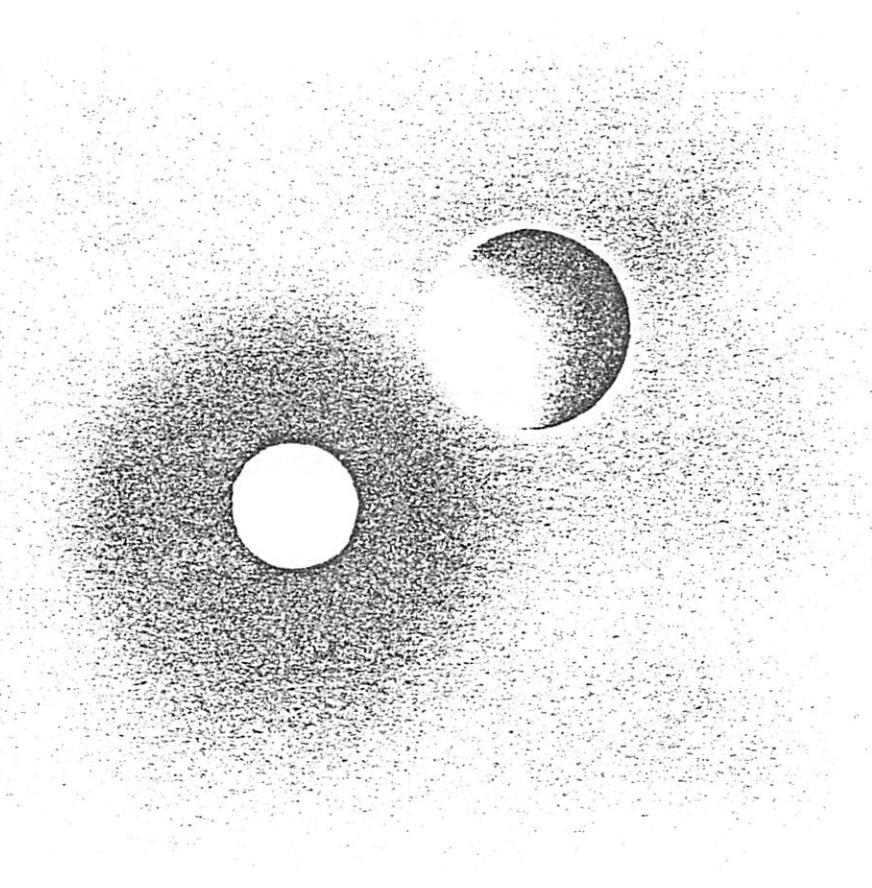
Strictly by calculating how long he'd been flying, Starbuck attempted to judge how much fuel he had left. He didn't dare count on what was left in the cells for his high engine; he had no way of knowing if the transfer system was operative. He decided he didn't care much for this corner of the universe after all; without a planet to set down on, it looked rather bare. His fuel was not going to last too much longer, not after using battle thrusters. He decided he would rather die of asphyxiation on a hostile planet with solid ground underfoot than float on forever in his ship.

Gradually Starbuck became aware of a bright spot in the endless blackness. A sun? Near enough? Planets? Enough questions. How about some answers, and hopefully some positive ones. Starbuck banked to the right.

"Come on, baby. Hold together long enough to find me a planet!"

The bucking was getting increasingly violent. Starbuck decided he had banked enough to bring him into the hoped-for system on a tangent. He should be near enough to spot any planets.

Some time later, he did sight a planet. He cajoled his recalcitrant Viper into going nearer. No good. He'd freeze before he ever touched down. He kept going. Another planet, and this one better be good. The engines were spitting now, and that did not auger well for much more flight time. One engine quit altogether, and Starbuck decided he'd better land, regardless of planet conditions.



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As he entered the atmosphere, his mood brightened. At least the planet had an atmosphere; there was hope it was breathable. Now, if he could just find some land before his Viper quit on him...

Naturally, he came out of the clouds over a huge expanse of water.

Just as Starbuck decided he was not, in fact, going to asphyxiate, but rather drown, he spotted something on the horizon. A few more microns revealed there was indeed land on this planet. It was a good thing, too, because just as the Viper crossed the

beach, its last engine quit.

The Viper tumbled toward the surface, with Starbuck fighting the controls all the way. He wasn't sure how much good he was doing; but Starbuck always said he wouldn't go down without a fight, and he meant it. The Viper went into the ground belly first; and it went in hard. Metal tore; pieces flew.

When Starbuck came to, his first thought was about the atmosphere. Then he decided it didn't really matter. There was nowhere else for him to go. He popped the canopy and drew a deep breath. If he was going to choke, he wanted to do so immediately. To his pleasant surprise, the air was fresh, cool, moist -- and breathable. "It's about time something went right today."

When he tried to climb out of his ship, however, Starbuck decided that the air was the only thing that was right; his body was certainly all wrong. The flight harness had kept him alive, but had left him in bad enough shape. The muscles across his stomach screamed every time he tried to move. When he tried to pull himself up with his arms, he discovered his shoulders were likewise torn. He finally managed to get a leg under himself enough to push himself to a sitting position on the rim of his cockpit.

From his perch on the Viper, Starbuck surveyed the surrounding countryside. He didn't see anything but wilderness -- no houses, no roads, no tilled land. Just trees and scrub and... No, wait! There was something! A path? Maybe nothing more than an animal track. Still, it was useful to know that something moved through these woods.

Before he climbed down from the cockpit, because he knew he wouldn't be able to climb up again, Starbuck recorded a message just in case his automatic distress was working. He grabbed his emergency rations and first aid kit and tossed them to the ground, then swung his legs around and followed them down.

"Holy frak!" He crumpled into a heap. His torn and battered body wouldn't stand that kind of shock. After some rolling and struggling, Starbuck managed to get to a sitting position. Once that was accomplished, his legs were in good enough shape to get him standing upright.

Starbuck looked around from his new vantage point. Somehow, things just felt better with a planet under him. "Yeah, I'm pretty lucky after all," he decided. He'd gotten away from six Cylons who should have blasted the pogeess out of him, controlled (more or less) his crippled Viper, found a planet, walked away from a crash; and the air had sustained him this long. "Maybe it's going to be an all-right day after all."

For lack of anything better to do, Starbuck struck out along the path. His emergency rations wouldn't last long, and he was going to need food and water -- especially if his distress signal was not working and this place was going to be his new home.

When six Cylon attack craft appeared on the GALACTICA's scanners, the entire bridge crew tensed, waiting for the order to go to battle stations. When the six headed off across the quadrant, there should have been relief; this time, there wasn't. The Cy-lons were following Starbuck, and Starbuck was alone. Six to one were not good odds. There was a brief battle. During the course of it, Starbuck's automatic distress signal kicked in; he must have sustained a substantial hit.

Apollo and Adama were both intent on the scanner. Although Adama showed absolutely no emotion, Apollo was not quite so controlled. His hands were balled into tight fists; and when the distress signal ceased, both fists came down hard on the console. It took a micron for it to register that the blip indicating Starbuck's ship was still present; however, the Viper must have taken another bad hit.

"Is that ship under power?" Adama's strong voice rang across the bridge.

Omega's answer was precise as always. "The ship is holding a lateral line, and appears to be under partial power."

Apollo straightened. "Is there any voice contact?"

"Negative."

Apollo turned from the bridge, throwing back over his shoulder as he went, "Father, I'm taking a shuttle after Starbuck."

The Commander started to say something, then thought better of it. He shook his head and turned to Colonel Tigh. In a voice so muted that it would not carry beyond his aide, Adama sighed, "I should have stopped him."

\* \* \* \* \*

Starbuck was finding the path, as it ran uphill, increasingly hard to climb. The muscles across his stomach were in rebellion with every movement of his legs. He'd decided, however, for no obvious reason, that this was no animal track he was following. Perhaps it was the fact that it ran just a little straighter than an animal's meanderings, or that there didn't appear to be any major obstacles in the way; or perhaps it was just a devout wish to come in contact with other sentient beings. Maybe it was just the gambler in him, but the farther he walked, the more Starbuck believed he was headed somewhere.

When he finally got to the top of the small hill he'd been climbing, Starbuck dropped to his knees for a rest. He had decided on his way up that sitting might not be the best thing, not after the struggle he'd gone through to get upright back at the Viper. His knees seemed a good compromise. After a few deep breaths, Starbuck started to survey the scene around him. Nothing looked at all remarkable, just more woods, until he decided to try and look down the path and see, if he could, where it went.

At the bottom of the hill there was a small stream, small enough that one step would carry him over. On the other side of the stream, there was a clearing. The trees stood some way back, enough to allow the sun in. The path continued through the clearing and back into the woods.

It was the gleam of sunlight reflecting off metal just at the edge of the clearing that caused Starbuck to throw himself full-length to the ground. The number of curses that flew through his head between the time he launched himself and the time he hit the ground was incredible. When he smacked down, he knew the pain deserved them all. He added a few more for good measure, then raised his head to get a look at what was gleaming down there. Whatever it was, it was not heading up the path toward him, so Starbuck assumed he had not been seen. He continued to watch, and after a few microns caught the gleam again. It apparently had not moved.

After what felt like centars to his torn shoulders, Starbuck put his head down. There was no movement down the hill. His sixth sense about things lying in wait was not prickling. The time had come to find out what was down there.

A large tree helped Starbuck get himself up, and he started down the path toward the gleam still showing intermittently on the edge of the clearing. He drew his laser and worked his way around the perimeter of the clearing. No sense in being an obvious target when it wasn't necessary.

What Starbuck found lying in the path did nothing to make him feel better. It was a deactivated Cylon, or, more accurately, a blown-apart Cylon. Suddenly Starbuck was a mass of prickles. Where there was one Cylon, there were more. One thing was certain -- the path led somewhere.

\* \* \* \* \*

Apollo and Boomer approached the site of Starbuck's battle with the six Cylon attack ships. It was the last certain position they had for him, and some time had elapsed since the crippled Viper had limped beyond range.

"Well, Captain, where do we go from here?" Boomer's voice sounded totally calm, but his eyes betrayed him.

"We follow Starbuck's heading. There's not much else we can do." Apollo's voice, too, was calm, but the knuckles of the hand gripping the flight control were white.

The shuttle came around to what had been Starbuck's heading.

"You know, Apollo, that he couldn't have much fuel left after fighting a running battle."

"Boomer, he found someplace to set down. You know Starbuck's luck."

Apollo and Boomer exchanged looks. Neither of them believed they would see Starbuck again; but neither of them would admit that to the other, nor even to themselves. Somehow, the thought of Starbuck's luck kept their hope alive. And maybe luck kept Starbuck alive, too.

\* \* \* \* \*

Keeping to the shadows along the path seemed a very good idea now that Starbuck knew he was dealing with more than a herd of quadrupeds. Not only were there Cylons prowling these woods, there was also something that blew Cylons apart prowling these woods. Until he was certain that whatever it was that took Cylons apart didn't also take Starbuck's apart, he wanted to keep a low profile.

The woods began to thin, and cover became harder to come by. Suddenly it ceased altogether, on the edge of a cultivated field. Intelligent inhabitants! And Cylons didn't need grain, either!

Nothing moved, with the exception of a few small bird-type creatures. Starbuck decided to keep to the path. If he kept an eye out for any motion, he could (hopefully!) be under cover before anything spotted him.

Farther down the path were additional signs that Cylons were not welcome visitors. There was one sprawled over the fence ringing the grain field. There was one in the middle of the path. A little farther along, Starbuck discovered another one; and when a cabin came into view, he knew he was at the scene of a major battle. Cylons littered the entire yard, all in various stages of disrepair, all of them very still.

Starbuck wasn't sure he ought to venture any closer to that cabin. With the yard layered with Cylons, it didn't look too welcoming; but food and help might be in there, so he crept closer. Approaching the back door with an eye toward seeing just what was inside, he dropped down beside a large box that held wood, presumably for fires. He stuck his head around the edge of the box, making sure there was no one in sight. He was about to draw back when a tiny motion caught his attention. He looked directly around the box and discovered a young woman, not more than twenty yahrens old. She had beautiful golden hair that moved fitfully in the breeze. Her skin was fine, with a slight golden tinge. Her eyes were as blue as Caprica's sky, and they stared. They stared because she was dead, and had been for at least several centars, Starbuck judged.

\* \* \* \* \*

Apollo and Boomer followed Starbuck's heading in silence. The shuttle moved slowly so that both of them could watch the instruments and ports for any sign of Starbuck and his ship, or for that matter, any remnants of his ship. So far, their efforts had

been unproductive.

Boomer broke the silence. "How far do we go, Apollo?"

Apollo knew the unvoiced part of that question. "We keep going until we have to give up, Boomer. We keep going until we have to coast back into the GALACTICA's bays."

Boomer nodded in agreement. "He'd be powered down by now."

There wasn't anything to add to that.

\* \* \* \* \*

After checking around the cabin, Starbuck concluded that the young woman had been one Hades of a fighter. She must have downed thirty Cylons. He found the laser pistol she'd used not far from her body, and it was not quite empty. He tucked it into his belt; if he ran into more Cylons, it could come in handy.

He decided to move into the cabin. It was well-stocked with food; there was a well not too far away; and he'd found some kind of livestock, if he could only figure out what to do with them. He'd better take care of the grain field, too. He might be here a very long time. It was a shame he hadn't paid more attention when he'd toured the agro ships. He might have learned something useful.

Starbuck buried the young woman's body, after a fashion, by pushing it into a ravine and tumbling rocks on top of it. It was the best he could manage, given the present somewhat mangled state of his body. He ignored the Cylons.

Entering the cabin, Starbuck began making himself at home. He ate some of the food and washed most of the dirt off himself, then decided that the thing he needed most was some rest. He located a sleeping chamber and sighed deeply as he stretched himself full-length on the bed. "Now, this is luxury!"

He must have been asleep, but Starbuck was definitely not asleep now. The hairs on the nape of his neck were standing straight up. He knew he'd heard something. There it was again! A kind of whimper, or soft cry, and it seemed to come from inside the house.

Drawing his laser, Starbuck rose quietly -- if painfully -- from the bed and did a thorough check of the sleeping chamber. Nothing. He moved to the main sitting room, watching the windows carefully in case the sound was playing tricks and was really coming from out in the yard. Again, nothing. He moved stealthily into the kitchen and heard it again. It was in the kitchen, whatever it was.

Starbuck began his search by opening all the cabinets. Nothing. He checked behind draperies, and behind what he took for the

cooking apparatus. Nothing. He checked every cranny he could peer into, and still came up with nothing. Then he noticed a basket resting in a nook between the sitting room and the kitchen. It had what appeared to be dirty laundry in it. The laser came up rapidly when that laundry began to move.

Starbuck inched closer. Aiming the laser at the center of the basket, he leaned in close enough to pull off some of the cloth. Nothing jumped out, but something was squirming. One more tug, and there it was. Starbuck was so surprised that he almost dropped his laser.

\* \* \* \* \*

Apollo spotted the solar system on instruments, hit the thrusters, and headed toward it at top speed. Boomer was anxiously watching for any sign of a distress signal -- or anything else that would indicate Starbuck's presence.

The first planet was an ice world; Apollo and Boomer both agreed it was unlikely that Starbuck would have set down there. When they found the second planet, and when instruments said it was habitable, there was relief -- for a micron.

"Boomer, are you picking up any signals?"

"Negative."

There was silence while everything was double-checked.

"Where do we go from here, Captain?"

It took Apollo only a micron to make up his mind. "Back to the GALACTICA to pick up the correct instruments for a planet search. He's there, Boomer. I know he's there."

"Yeah. All we have to do is convince the Commander he's there, and then get back and find him."

\* \* \* \* \*

Starbuck stood staring at the tiny bit of life in the laundry basket. "Holy frak! A kid!"

The child had the same sunny yellow hair and delicate golden skin as the young woman -- it must be her child. "No wonder she was such a fighter. She had you to protect, young man... Or is it young lady?" At the sound of someone speaking, the child's face split into a wide smile, and it began to coo.

Starbuck grinned back, then bent to pick up the baby. He did a hasty retreat, however, when he encountered soaking wet swaddling. "Now, how in the twelve worlds do we go about remedying that? Well, if there's dirty laundry around, there must be clean stuff, too." He went back to the kitchen cabinets and came up

with a clean cloth that would serve the purpose. After some fumbling around, and after sticking himself at least four times, he accomplished a reasonable facsimile of a diapering job. He'd also determined that he was dealing with a young man. That, at least, made him feel a little more comfortable.

All comfort fled, however, when the boy began to cry, and misery was at hand when the cry became a scream.

"Hush up, kid! Do you want to bring the Cylons down on us?" Starbuck bent and picked up the armful. The screaming stopped, but not the crying. "Now, what do I do when I feel like this? I guess I'd have a drink. A drink! Of course! You haven't had anything to drink for centars!"

Some more rummaging in the kitchen produced a cup and a crock of cool water. Starbuck was soaked when they were through, since evidently the child was not an expert at drinking from a cup; but the baby had stopped crying.

Even the small bundle that was the boy was proving a strain on Starbuck's injured shoulders, so the two moved into the sitting room and found a comfortable chair. Starbuck sank gratefully into the cushions, and the baby sank gratefully into Starbuck's lap. It didn't take long for both of them to be fast asleep again.

\* \* \* \* \*

Apollo and Boomer raced back toward the GALACTICA. When they came into range, Apollo contacted Core Control and ordered the equipment needed for a planet search. Both of them rather hoped their request would go unnoticed; but evidently the equipment was unusual enough that Core Control informed the Commander. It didn't take long for Adama to appear on the shuttle's scanner.

"Captain Apollo, I have just been informed that you have requested some rather unusual equipment. What is the purpose of your request?"

Apollo cursed under his breath. Adama the military commander would not be as easy to convince as Apollo's father and Starbuck's friend would be. "Commander, I have reason to believe that Lieutenant Starbuck found a planet on which to set his ship. I want to search for him." Lords, did he sound stilted! Still, if Adama wanted it by the book...

"I will consider your request. Report to me as soon as you land." Adama's face left the screen.

Boomer leaned toward Apollo. "Well, my friend, if that's any indication, I don't think our plan is going to be very well received."

"We've got to convince him, Boomer. We've got to."

The bridge was busy as usual. Adama reigned over all from his chair, and somehow managed to know exactly what was going on everywhere. Apollo and Boomer approached hurriedly.

"Commander, I want to go after Starbuck." Apollo thought it wise to get in the first word; that way, he couldn't be dismissed without Adama at least giving him a reason for not searching.

Adama did not look pleased. "Apollo, I will slow the Fleet as much as possible, but you must know your time will be limited. I cannot bring a fleet of two hundred and twenty ships to a complete halt while you search for one man. Also, there are Cylons in this quadrant. Should there be any risk of detection, the Fleet may be forced to change course. I will not hesitate to do so. In that event, you may not be able to find us again. Under those conditions, do you still want to go?"

"Yes, sir!" Apollo and Boomer chorused.

"Even though I consider such an action ill-advised?" The Commander sounded stern.

Apollo and Boomer both nodded.

Adama sighed. "Time is in short supply." He extended his hand to his son, and then to Boomer.

The two Warriors raced from the bridge so quickly that they didn't hear Adama wish them luck.

As the shuttle launched, Boomer turned to Apollo. "Uh, Apollo, didn't we just violate orders?"

"Well..." Apollo thought for a micron. "I don't recall hearing a direct order stated. Do you want to go back?"

"No. Like you said once, I've been hanging around Starbuck too long."

\* \* \* \* \*

Starbuck awoke to the feel of warm fluid spreading across his lap. "Holy frak, kid! Don't you call your shots?"

The second diaper change was handled much more expertly than the first. Starbuck only stuck himself once. While he was changing the boy, he kept up a monologue. At the end of it, "I can't go on calling you 'kid', kid, so how about a name? Let's see... I have it! It just suits you! How about Aquarius?" The baby gurgled up at Starbuck, and the Warrior took that for assent. "Aquarius it is."

Finding dry pants for Starbuck turned out to be much harder than finding dry pants for Aquarius. Evidently the woman had lived by

herself; there was no men's clothing in evidence. Starbuck finally settled on a pair made of some heavy cloth, apparently work pants of some type. He couldn't quite fasten the front; but his belt held them up well enough, although they only covered the top half of his calf. When he caught a glimpse of himself reflected in the window, he looked so ridiculous even to himself that it started a paroxysm of laughter. "It's a good thing none of the guys are here to see this!"

Starbuck laid Aquarius back in the laundry basket, and proceeded to wash out his uniform pants in the kitchen sink. "I didn't know I was so domestic, Aquarius." He flipped the pants over the porch railing to dry, noting to himself that they couldn't dry fast enough to suit him.

When he returned to the kitchen, it suddenly struck him that he was hungry. Well, that wouldn't be too much of a problem, but what was he going to feed Aquarius? A search of the cabinets finally turned up some kind of fruit that looked like it would mash up fairly well, and some kind of milky stuff in a can.

Starbuck set about preparing a meal for himself and Aquarius. When it was ready, he scooped the baby out of the laundry basket, pulled a chair to the table, settled himself comfortably, and arranged the child neatly in his lap. Then he picked up a spoon and placed it in the baby's tightly coiled fist. "Okay, kid, dig in."

After Aquarius had smacked him smartly on the chin and poked the spoon into his own eye, Starbuck began to get the idea that the baby was not going to feed himself.

The Warrior began to think about this logistical problem in a military manner. The kid had to be fed; still, no solutions appeared readily. Finally, however, Starbuck caught sight of a cutting board. He scooped a heap of dirty laundry out of what he had come to think of as Aquarius' basket and piled it on the table. Then he laid the cutting board, wrapped in a towel for cushioning, against the laundry so as to form an incline. He sat Aquarius on the table with the child's back against the incline, creating a seat of sorts. One good thing about it was that it left Starbuck with two free hands.

It didn't take long for him to learn that he needed two free hands; he wished he had two more. The first scoop of pulp that Starbuck tried to shovel into Aquarius' mouth went flying as a tiny fist hit the spoon. The second spoonful ended up in the child's ear; the third found its target, but Starbuck got an instant refund.

He sat back for a moment. "Look, kid, let's get something straight. You've got to eat, and I'm going to feed you, so let's do this with a minimum of fuss, huh?"

The fourth spoonful was really only a dab. Starbuck managed to

get it to the baby's mouth without mishap, and Aquarius ate happily. "Hey! I think I'm beginning to get the hang of this!"

Aquarius consumed what Starbuck thought was a huge amount in relation to his size. The amount of food spread over Starbuck, Aquarius, and the kitchen never occurred to him.

By the time Starbuck finished his own meal, the infant was fast asleep. The Warrior tenderly picked up the baby, wrapped him in a towel for warmth, and then laid the sleeping child gently in the basket, drawing another towel up to the baby's chin. He stood over the sleeping infant for a micron. His features smoothed into a tender smile, and Starbuck admitted to himself that "his" baby was beautiful.

The lieutenant took advantage of Aquarius' nap and did a further reconnaissance of the cabin. The sun was beginning to set, and there was a definite chill in the air. They were going to need a source of heat, and Aquarius was going to need some clothing over and above a diaper. In the sleeping chamber, Starbuck found a dresser drawer full of things that could only belong to Aquarius. He chose a set of clothes that appeared to be soft and warm, then went into the sitting room and laid a fire in the fireplace. Next, he went back into the kitchen, sort of cleaned up after their meal, and then quickly went out to the well -- he didn't want to leave Aquarius alone for more than a micron.

When all was in readiness for the coming night, Starbuck took a cup of a strong liquor he'd found in the kitchen and seated himself comfortably in front of the fire. He decided that if he had to be stranded, this place wasn't so bad. He had a home, food, and -- most important of all -- company. The liquor was powerful, and, in spite of two brief naps, Starbuck had had a long and challenging day. The warmth of the fire crept over him, and the weary Warrior slipped into slumber.

\* \* \* \* \*

Apollo and Boomer had had a long day, too -- but theirs looked far from being over. They had searched the day side of the planet, hoping to find Starbuck that much quicker; now it appeared they would have to tackle the night side -- and that only made finding their lost comrade that much more difficult.

\* \* \* \* \*

Starbuck awoke with a start when Aquarius began squealing. It was full dark now; and when he checked his chronometer, he discovered he'd been asleep for some time. The fire had died down; Starbuck took the time to replenish it before going to Aquarius. The boy needed another set of dry pants, but this time Starbuck had the proper diapers, found in the drawer. He dressed the child in the warm clothes he'd chosen and set Aquarius back in the basket, assuming the child would immediately fall asleep. After all, it was the middle of the night.

No such luck. In fact, as soon as Starbuck set him down, Aquarius began to yell. Starbuck tried to give him a drink, but it was totally refused. The infant was screaming too hard for Starbuck to even think of feeding him. He held the wretched child against his chest as well as his injured arms would allow and out of desperation began to walk rapidly up and down the length of the sitting room. Gradually the screams faded to whimpering, and eventually the whimpering began to subside. It was a good thing, too, because Starbuck didn't think he could hold Aquarius for one more micron -- his torn shoulders shook as he put the child on the fuzzy rug in front of the fire. The baby was fully awake and ready to play. Starbuck obliged.



"We did it, Boomer! We did it!" Apollo whacked his friend affectionately on the shoulder. "I told you he'd set it down!"

All joy evaporated, however, when the shuttle landed and the two Warriors saw the condition of Starbuck's Viper. Apollo didn't even want to find out what was inside, but Boomer ran ahead.

"There's a message on the recorder!" Boomer's voice sounded triumphant.

After listening to the playback, the two Warriors started down the path after Starbuck. And wasn't it just like Starbuck to make them take a hike in pitch blackness, on an unfamiliar planet, after the kind of day they'd had?

When Apollo and Boomer came across the deactivated Cylons, their caution increased. By the time they found the cabin, they were creeping carefully with drawn lasers. In absolute silence, they moved to the back door of the cabin. Starbuck's pants flapping in the breeze on the porch railing gave Apollo quite a start. He cautiously pushed the door open, slid through, then motioned to Boomer to follow. There were noises from the next room, so both Warriors charged the door, ready to fire. They were greeted by the sight of Starbuck sitting on the floor in some kind of utterly ridiculous trousers barely covering his knees, bouncing a baby in his lap.

Starbuck looked up. "Took you long enough to get here. Are my pants dry yet?"

\* \* \* \* \*

Adama met the shuttle in the landing bay. Quite frankly, he was happy to have those three back. They were trying at times, but...

Apollo and Boomer emerged from the shuttle with unusually silly grins on their faces.

"Father, I think Starbuck has a surprise for you."

Adama started to enter the shuttle, but Starbuck appeared in the hatch and dumped something into the Commander's arms. It squirmed. "A baby? A baby!"

Starbuck began to fuss. "That's not how you hold him, Commander. Here, let me show you."

Apollo and Boomer broke into peals of laughter that left them clinging helplessly to each other. The picture of Starbuck instructing Adama on childcare was one they would not soon forget.

They weren't about to let Starbuck forget it, either. They kidded him all the way back to their quarters.

"Starbuck, you look so precious when you play daddy." Boomer was laughing so hard the words barely got out.

"Yeah," Apollo added. "And what a good housekeeper you're going to make." More laughter.

Starbuck turned to face his two erstwhile companions. "Enjoy your laugh, guys, because the Commander and I have plans for a little celebration. And I'll be the one who's laughing when he orders you two to babysit."

This time, Starbuck had the last word.

"The Sword"

(By Tyres)

The bridge of the GALACTICA appeared routinely busy as duty change was completed, yet there was an aura of anxiety permeating the fresh crew, as though some unseen force tampered with the vital core of their existence. The rumours, "scuttlebutt", started quietly, and as each shift passed, another shred of evidence seemed to sustain it. Even during battle maneuvers and the repelling of Cylon attack craft, there never existed this feeling of cold insecurity that the GALACTICA crew felt closing in on them now. Senior watch officers had seen this situation before with their subordinates, but none had ever seen this occur at Command level. Their worst fears were about to become reality.

"Colonel Tigh, notify all divisional commanders that I still intend to hold inspection of their areas as previously directed," Adama snapped.

"Commander, at what centar shall I tell them to expect you?"

"When I get there, Colonel!" exploded Adama, wheeling about, his steel-blue eyes piercing the air like daggers. Within a micron, Adama regained his composure and quickly added, "It has to be a surprise inspection, Colonel. If I inform them of when I am coming, it defeats the purpose of attempting to keep this flagship in its top-most military condition."

"Top-most military condition," Adama mused quietly to himself. "What a cruel paradox."

"Colonel Tigh, you have the con. I'll be in my quarters. See that I am not disturbed."

Without hesitation, Adama strode from the bridge, feeling every set of eyes following him to the hatchway.

\* \* \* \* \*

Starbuck came bounding down the hallway as if on turbo-boost. He figured if he could get a serious backer for his latest absolutely foolproof pyramid system, he could win more cubits than he could load into the shuttle. But the shuttle was leaving for the RISING STAR within centons, and he had to find Apollo. "Who else," he mused, "could I, uh, convince to back me?"

Apollo wasn't in his quarters, so Starbuck figured the Captain was heading for Command Center. "Now, if I can just catch Apollo before he reaches the bridge, I can..."

As he zoomed around the corner, the collision sent both men reeling. Starbuck was about to inform his opponent which end of a

reactor tube to crawl into when he realized who that opponent was.

Adama smiled weakly. "Oh... Starbuck. I'm terribly sorry. I should be more careful. Please forgive me."

Thoroughly dumbfounded, Starbuck became very aware of the Commander's transparent stare as he spoke. He was positive the Commander wasn't really cognizant of his presence.

Without another word, Adama turned the corner and disappeared.

Starbuck never caught the shuttle.

\* \* \* \* \*

When the door to his quarters was secured, Adama walked slowly to his desk console. He seated himself, then with painful effort punched a button.

"Tigh, give my regrets to the Council and inform them that I will not be attending the session tonight." Without waiting for a response, he snapped off the scanner.

After what seemed to be yahrens of silence, Adama uttered a single hushed word -- "Ila."

He had forced her out of his mind when the Colonies were destroyed, she being lost with millions of others on Caprica. The safety of the Fleet had been the focal point of his existence for so many countless sectons that it was relatively easy to dissociate himself from his personal life. But as centar upon centar of military actions, countless arguments and pressures from the Council, and increasing personal sorrows mounted, Adama had finally reached his limits.

"Ila," he whispered, "wherever the gods have taken you, please, please hear me. I've had enough. I am no longer capable of carrying the burden for my people. My essence is so battered and bruised that I don't even recognize myself. I fear my officers are beginning to sense this also. Oh, Ila, who does the Commander turn to for strength and purpose when his own have been wrenched from him? By the Lords of Kobol, I cannot carry on any longer..."

As his thoughts rushed in turmoil, Adama's face was still etched with the expressionless mask that had been his trademark on the bridge. Only one thing had changed. A single droplet of moisture emerged from the corner of his eye and travelled slowly down his cheek.

\* \* \* \* \*

"Apollo," Starbuck muttered angrily, "where in Hades are you when I need you?" Although still searching for Apollo, his motivation was vastly different. He'd never seen the Commander in such a state, not even when Count Iblis had almost succeeded in turning

the entire Council and crew of the GALACTICA against him. Starbuck caught a glimpse of a figure headed in the direction of the celestial chamber. Within a micron, he was at that man's side.

"Apollo, I have to talk to you," Starbuck said quickly.

Just as quickly, Apollo answered, "No! Starbuck, I will not back your systems again as long as I breathe. By the Lords, the last time..."

"Will you shut up long enough to come up to speed...Sir!" retorted Starbuck. "I literally ran into your father a couple of centons ago, and he didn't even seem to notice that I stood in front of him. I know he sometimes wishes that I wouldn't be noticed, but his mind was in some other universe. In fact, I almost knocked him through the bulkhead, and he apologized to me for almost sending him to the Life Center!"

Apollo stood motionless, recollecting other times within the last secton that his father reacted totally out of character. The distant mannerisms when he spoke to Apollo or Athena. The quick words of reproach to Boxey when his antics with the daggit became a little too noisy. Something was definitely wrong.

"You've got to talk to him, Apollo," Starbuck announced.

"No, I can't," Apollo replied. "My father's as impenetrable as this battlestar. I've never seen him exhibit the slightest trace of emotional unrest." He shook his head. "Starbuck, how can I approach the man who's been my comfort and security all my life? How do I dare enter the world of the man who is the source of my own life, and ask that he spread his out before me?"

Reluctantly, Starbuck agreed. He reminded himself of the many times Adama had acted as his own father. "You're right. But what can we do about it? Who can we get to talk to him?"

After a full centon's hesitation, Apollo replied, "Perhaps Tigh," and then quickly went in search of the Colonel, a bewildered Starbuck in tow.

\* \* \* \* \*

Adama forced himself from behind the console and proceeded to painstakingly search through his personal effects for a small box. Gold-trimmed, lined with the finest black velvet produced in the Colonies, it contained the insignia of all the ranks Adama had held, save that of battlestar commander. As he advanced from raw flight lieutenant up through commander, he had placed each previous insignia in the box. Slowly, deliberately, Adama removed the commander's medallion from his uniform.

\* \* \* \* \*

Tigh was seated at the command console on the bridge, engrossed in the myriad duties required of an executive officer. He was not aware of Apollo and Starbuck until they hovered over him.

Almost surprised, he asked, "Yes? What do you want? And, Starbuck, aren't you supposed to be on the RISING STAR?"

Before Starbuck could answer, Apollo replied, "Colonel, it's the Commander. He seems to..."

Tigh cut him off. "Yes, Apollo, I've noticed. Whatever it is, it is definitely affecting the functioning of this ship. In fact, I'm a little concerned myself."

"Colonel," Starbuck interjected, "maybe you could do something. It's common knowledge that you and the Commander attended the Military Institute on Caprica together. Perhaps..."

"Perhaps, Starbuck. But the bridge is no place for this type of discussion, and I'm convinced the Commander can resolve his own problems. Dismissed."

"But, Colonel..." Apollo began.

"Dismissed!"

Dejectedly, Apollo and Starbuck left the bridge.

"Perhaps..." Tigh said to himself when they were gone.

"Command officers! This is Tigh. Commence individual responsibility. If anything arises I'll be in the Commander's quarters."

\* \* \* \* \*

Adama placed the Commander's medallion in its place in the box just as Tigh entered.

"Colonel, is it standard operational procedure to burst into a superior officer's quarters without permission?"

"No, sir," Tigh replied. "But when you didn't answer your entrance page, I became worried. And, as I am temporarily in command of this ship, I felt the need to investigate." Tigh glanced briefly at the box and added, "Commander, you're out of uniform."

Adama walked back to the desk, seated himself slowly, and replied, "Tigh, that's not the only thing I'm out of. I've been drained of all my reserves of energy, of strength. The weight of this position has worn me down. Tigh, I cannot command again."

Adama's eyes fell. Tigh examined the black velvet box, then went to the empty chair directly across from Adama and, without permission, sat down.

"Commander, I recall a time many yahrens ago at the Academy, when a second-yahren senior gave advice to one of the rawest freshmen ever to enter the ranks of would-be Warriors. He said, 'Command is the most dangerous endeavour in the entire military profession; it is the sharpest of double-edged blades. If used properly, it destroys your enemies in a single sweep; if used improp-



erly, it will do great harm to its wielder. As it strikes down its enemies, it can whittle down the soul of its user until only a shadow of the man exists. We are the carriers of that sword. If a man is injured by or falls under the weight of his sword, it is our duty to share that struggle with him. To help him.'"

While Adama was thinking, Tigh removed the commander's medallion from the velvet box. He returned with it, and with the medallion in his outstretched hand said, "Commander, you presented me with my Colonel's insignia when I became your executive officer, so it is only fit that I give this to you now." Several microns passed, then Tigh added, "My duty is complete. I have lifted the fallen sword to your hand. You must grasp it."

Adama deliberately reached out and picked up the insignia. Fingering the medallion, he stared at it. Finally, he raised his hands to his collar and replaced it.

Reaching out, he offered his hand to Tigh. That handclasp spoke of a friendship that had just been tightened by bonds forged in steel.

An alarm buzzer sounded on the console. Cat-quick, Adama answered it.

"Commander, long-range scanners report unidentified craft approaching."

"We'll be there immediately."

Adama's eyes met Tigh's. "Colonel, we have work to do."

\* \* \* \* \*

Every officer on the bridge sensed the change as Adama returned to the command station. The eyes were brighter, the tone of voice fresher, deeper. Apollo and Starbuck entered for their final long-range reconnaissance orders. After receiving them, they started for the launch bay, but were stopped as Adama spoke to them.

"Warriors, take heed not to be slashed."

Apollo's face registered his surprise, but there was no time to investigate.

Starbuck, not used to the idea of being bewildered three times in as many centars, left the bridge muttering something about "the quiet of deep space."

## IMPORTANT ADDRESSES

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"Starbucked"

(By Pat Beese)

Starbuck lounged against the lockers in Blue Squadron's quarters. That new kid, Arcturus, was a real neophyte, and he was going to be a royal pain. Starbuck was certain that the kid had never even launched in a Viper, in spite of the personnel report. Oh, well, he wouldn't have to babysit until tomorrow, when they were on patrol. He pushed himself off the lockers and decided to see who he could talk into backing his latest system for pyramid. Too bad it was so late in the pay period. It could prove difficult to find a pigeon -- uh, backer.

On his way into the bachelor officers' quarters, Apollo bumped into Starbuck. "What're you doing here, Starbuck? With a few centars leisure at your disposal, I'd have expected to find you on the RISING STAR."

"I was just cleaning up. Hey, buddy, I've discovered a new system. This one can't lose. Can you lend me a few cubits so I can play a little pyramid? I'll double your investment for you."

"Not on your life, Starbuck. That game when we met Chameleon was the last time I'll ever back one of your systems."

"Aw, Captain, you have no heart."

"You're right. But I have got my cubits, and I intend to hang on to them. Go charm somebody else."

"How's that for a friend?" Starbuck mumbled as he sauntered off down the corridor.

Apollo couldn't resist a chuckle. Starbuck would never know just how hard it was to refuse him anything. If he had pressed, Apollo knew, Starbuck would have had all the cubits Apollo possessed.

Arcturus was sitting on his bunk, reading a technical manual. He knew he would be under Captain Apollo's eye, and that meant he might as well be directly under Commander Adama's. That left very little room for mistakes. Someone entered the room, and Arcturus glanced up casually. When he realized it was Captain Apollo, he sprang off the bunk and was at the ready before he hit the floor.

When Apollo saw Arcturus, it was all he could do to keep a straight face. He was too green to be believed! No one hopped to like that around here.

"Relax, Arcturus. I just came to pick up a printout I left here.

Any sign of it?"

"Sir, I believe it's on the counter, sir."

Apollo could hardly believe his ears. Two "sirs" in one sentence! This was a Warrior? Still, the personnel report had said Arcturus really did know how to fly a Viper, had a few patrols under his belt, was a crack shot, and showed plenty of courage. It was kind of tough to reconcile that report with the cherubic personality in front of him, though.

"Sit down, and let's get to know one another, Arcturus. How many patrols have you been on?"

"Seven, sir, and I've got a Cylon to my credit, too." It was easy to boast about that Cylon, but Arcturus immediately regretted having done so. What if the Captain decided he was a braggart?

Apollo smiled warmly. "Good! Every one of those things that gets smashed makes me feel that much better. Have you met all the guys yet?"

"No, sir. I've met Sergeant Jolly and Lieutenant Starbuck, sir, but so far, that's all, sir."

"Well, they'll drift in as it gets closer to report time. None of those guys will fly a patrol with no sleep." Except possibly Starbuck, Apollo added to himself, but no sense in letting Arcturus fall into Starbuck's bad habits. One Starbuck was quite enough, thank you. "What do you think of Starbuck?"

"I like him, sir. He said he wasn't too thrilled with having a novice like me around, sir, but he's really not all that much older, sir, and he was friendly enough, sir."

Apollo hadn't heard that many "sirs" in his entire career! "Starbuck's a likable guy, all right. And he's as good a friend as a man can have. But just the same, keep a tight fist on your cubits when he's around. Starbuck has been known to gamble on occasion." Any occasion! "Don't lend him money. You're not likely to get it back. You can trust him with anything else, though, including your life." Apollo got to his feet. Arcturus had been warned. "This squadron is the best, Arcturus; and if you'll just relax a little, you'll fit right in."

Arcturus rose when Apollo did. "Yes, sir!"

Apollo was shaking his head as he left for his quarters. He found Starbuck sitting dejectedly in the shuttle lounge. Apollo thought he had never seen his friend look so down.

"What in the twelve worlds is the matter with you? You look like you just folded a triple-level pyramid!"

"Apollo, I've been all over this bird, spoken to everyone who

owes me a favour, and a few who don't, and there isn't a loose cubit anywhere on the GALACTICA. It's incredible! I've got this foolproof system, time to get to the RISING STAR, and I haven't got a cubit to my name, borrowed or otherwise. It's enough to make a Warrior cry."

Apollo kept a straight face with great difficulty. "Not to minimize your problem, Starbuck, but there's something I want to talk to you about. That new guy, Arcturus, seems to like you for some reason. I want you to leave him alone. He's so green that the agro ships are looking for him, and I want him to have a chance to knock off his own corners without any help from you. All right?"

Starbuck looked positively stricken. "I wouldn't do anything to a kid!"

"Starbuck, he's 'family' now. Leave him be. All right?"

"Oh, all right. He was my last hope of finding ready cash."

"I kind of thought your mind might be working along those lines. Leave him be."

"Say, Apollo, you wouldn't care to change your mind about lending me a few cubits, would you? I know this system is going to work. I haven't had a feeling like this about a system since..."

"Since the last time you had a feeling like this about a system, and I lost a secton's pay. Not on your life, Starbuck." Apollo rose and strode hurriedly down the corridor.

"Apollo, give a guy a chance!" Starbuck called to Apollo's retreating back. "Oh, frak!"

Starbuck made his way back to his quarters. If he couldn't get his hands on any money -- and he couldn't -- there was no sense in going to the RISING STAR, so he might as well get some sleep -- if a guy could sleep when he was as frustrated as Hades. He dragged his feet through the hatch into Blue Squadron's quarters and faced the sight of Arcturus, positively angelic, counting a pile of shiny golden cubits. All memory of Apollo's warning fled with the sight of money.

"Hey, kid. That's quite a pile of cubits. Don't you ever spend any of it?"

Arcturus was down off his bunk and at the ready again. "Lieutenant Starbuck, sir, I try not to spend much. I've got a kid sister back on one of the freighters that I've got to take care of, and, well, sir, I was just trying to figure out if I have enough to do something nice for her birthday. I'd like to take her to the RISING STAR for dinner, sir, and buy her a new dress, and show her off a little. She's really a pretty girl, sir, but nobody ever sees her stuck back there on the ATLAS, sir."

"Save the 'sirs' for Apollo." Was that a twinge of conscience? "We're off duty now, and talking like a couple of friends. Loosen up."

Slowly the kid did unwind; a little of the stiffness went out of him, and Starbuck finally got him to talk without peppering every sentence with "sirs". The time was right. Starbuck made his move.

Leaning back in his chair and pulling a cigar out of his sleeve, Starbuck eyed the kid with an expression of pity. "That's all the cubits you've got, huh? You know, I had dinner on the RISING STAR not too long ago, and it cost me every cubit I had. I really don't think you've got enough there."

The kid's face fell into what could only be called abject sorrow. "I guess my sister needs the dress more than she needs a fancy dinner, but I really did want to show her off."

"You know, kid, there is a way for you to double that money. Then you'd have enough for a fancy dress and a fancy dinner. Not really risky, either. All you have to do is sit back and count your cubits."

"How do you do that, Lieutenant Starbuck?"

Starbuck's arm wound its way around the kid's shoulders. "All you really need is the right knowledge, kid. And I've got it. I just discovered a pyramid system that is absolutely foolproof. It can't miss! A lot of the guys wanted to back me, but it being so close to the end of the pay period, most of them are broke. I told them all that it'll just have to wait until the next time we have a furlon, however long that may be." Starbuck sat back quietly to give that information a chance to filter through. If he'd worked it right, the kid should beg Starbuck to take his money just about... now.

"Lieutenant Starbuck, this is a lot to ask, I know, but would you be willing to play with my money, and see if you can't win some more for me? My sister's birthday is soon, and..."

"Well, kid, it is kind of late..." No use looking too anxious.

"Please, Lieutenant Starbuck, sir. It'd mean a great deal to my sister. She hasn't been off that freighter since Carillon."

"All right, kid. You talked me into it. We wouldn't want to disappoint the little lady, now would we? If we hurry, we can just make the next shuttle."

\* \* \* \* \*

About three centars later, an agitated Starbuck crossed the threshold of Blue Squadron's quarters, followed by a very dejected Arcturus.

"You know, kid, there is no reason for that system not to work. I just don't understand it."

"Please, Lieutenant Starbuck. I feel bad enough. Now my sister won't have anything special. Just let me go to sleep. Okay?"

"Sure, kid. You go to sleep. I'm gonna get a drink and see if I can figure out what happened." Starbuck headed out the door. He turned back. "You know, kid, I'm sorry it worked out like this."

For some reason, Starbuck really was sorry. Usually it didn't bother him when he lost money -- especially other people's money -- but this time... Then it hit him. Apollo! He'd promised Apollo he would leave the kid alone! Holy frak! Was he in for it!

Head down, really and truly glum, Starbuck made his way to the Officers' Club. He found a quiet table and sat with his back to everyone. When the barman approached, Starbuck pulled Arcturus's last cubit out of his belt, fingered it lovingly. He asked for ale and most reluctantly paid for it. One ale was not going to go far toward helping him feel better.

When a shadow fell across the table, Starbuck did not want to look up. There was something compelling about that hovering shadow, however. It was Apollo, and there was a look on his face that could freeze a sun.

"May I join you, Starbuck?"

Starbuck shrugged. He guessed from Apollo's face that he had just left Arcturus. Starbuck supposed he was about to catch Hades. He straightened himself in his chair, mentally cautioning himself to take everything Apollo was about to dish out. He deserved every word.

"Really feel rotten, don't you?"

Starbuck nodded.

"You deserve it."

Starbuck nodded.

"I warned you."

Starbuck nodded.

"Did you learn anything?"

Starbuck nodded. "Yeah. I learned not to play with kids."

Apollo sighed. Starbuck hadn't learned a thing, but at least he had the decency to feel bad. "I'll buy you another ale, then you get back to quarters and get some sleep. And don't borrow any money on the way. Consider that an order."

When the mug appeared, Apollo stood. He looked down at Starbuck for a few microns. It was obvious Starbuck truly felt badly, but without knowing why. Perhaps it was time someone taught him why in a way he would understand. And Apollo thought he knew just the man for the job. Apollo.

\* \* \* \* \*

Dr. Wilker was not usually the most pleasant man when awakened in the middle of his sleep period, but as soon as Apollo mentioned teaching Starbuck a lesson, he brightened. Wilker had always wanted to see somebody teach Starbuck something -- anything.

Now the computer was humming and clicking, and lights were flashing merrily. Apollo was pretty good with a flight computer, but this stuff was beyond him. Wilker was behind a stack of loose parts, talking happily to his machine. When all was ready, he asked Apollo exactly what it was he wanted the computer to do.

"It's really very simple. I want a sure-fire way to win at pyramid."

"You and every other young fool."

"I'm serious. That's the tool I need."

"Well, I can't pull time off priority projects. Will a few days do? I can tell my friend here to work on your problem when it has the time."

"That'll be fine, Dr. Wilker. There's just one more thing. I want you to tell the computer that no one else is ever to get a copy of this program."

\* \* \* \* \*

Several days later, the message button on Apollo's com line was flashing when he returned from patrol. When he punched up the message, two words flashed on the screen. "System ready."

Apollo headed for Wilker's lab, being very careful that no one noticed where he was headed. It felt strange to skulk around the GALACTICA, where he was so at home and knew everyone and everything. He had to admit it was kind of exciting, though. Maybe this was the way Starbuck felt every time he started something off-colour, and maybe it was why Starbuck did it so often.

The system was indeed ready, and far simpler than Apollo had dared hope. It broke every "rule" of gambling Starbuck ever taught him, but that didn't matter if it worked. A little study, and he should have the basics memorized.

The next chance he got, Apollo headed for the RISING STAR. It didn't take long for him to win enough to reimburse Arcturus for Starbuck's losses. The system worked, and Apollo felt confident enough to begin Starbuck's "lesson".

\* \* \* \* \*

The recon patrol had been long and boring. Starbuck dearly felt the need for some cool ale to trickle down his throat. He also felt tired and dirty. The only problem was deciding which he wanted more -- a drink or a turbowash. Starbuck assumed Apollo would head toward his own quarters, as he almost always did these days after debriefing. Shock was not the word for it, then, when Apollo grabbed his arm and began to haul him bodily down the corridor toward the shuttle bays.

"Uh, buddy, just where is it we're going?"

"To the RISING STAR."

"Don't you have this a little backwards? Isn't it me who's supposed to drag you to the RISING STAR?"

"Will you hurry, Starbuck? I don't want to miss the shuttle. I feel really lucky tonight."

"You feel lucky? You mean you feel ill. Let's go to Life Center and let Dr. Salik have a look at you."

The grip on Starbuck's arm tightened as Apollo tugged harder. "Come on, Starbuck! I don't want to waste time waiting for another shuttle."

"Don't worry about a thing, Apollo. It's probably just a virus. The Doc will have you fixed up in no time."

"Will you knock it off, Starbuck? I feel fine. I just want to win a few of somebody else's cubits, that's all."

The two Warriors entered the crowded shuttle and found seats. Starbuck was patently unhappy during the brief voyage. Apollo went on and on about how he was going to come out of the RISING STAR the biggest winner ever, and how lucky Starbuck was to witness Apollo's great triumph -- on and on, until Starbuck wanted desperately to shut him up. Maybe it wasn't a virus that had gotten Apollo. Maybe it was a Cylon plot to replace people with machines. Starbuck peered cautiously at Apollo out of the corner of his eye. No, that was Apollo, only something had happened to him during that patrol... He was acting crazy. Better just let him have his way for now, and keep an eye on him. Starbuck would get him to Dr. Salik as soon as he could.

Immediately upon touchdown, Apollo headed for Starbuck's favourite pyramid table, dragging Starbuck like an anchor. He set himself up in Starbuck's favourite seat and brought out a pile of cubits. Starbuck resolved not to let his friend lose too much before he hauled Apollo off to Life Center.

Four centars later, Starbuck was all but comatose. Apollo had broken every rule. He folded with hands that had to be winners. He hovered with hands that anything would beat. He should have

lost every cubit he had inside of fifteen centons. Instead, he won a pile of cubits that would content a man of Starbuck's simple tastes for at least a secton.

At last Apollo stood. "I think that's enough for tonight. There ought to be enough here for Blue Squadron to have a little fling. Don't you agree, Starbuck? Let's get a load of ale and ambrosia right now. There's no time like the present for a festivity. What's that you're always saying? 'Live for today.'"

It didn't take long for Blue Squadron's quarters to light up. Nobody had to ask a Warrior twice if he wanted a drink. Protein and mushies and ale and ambrosia flowed freely, and the sounds of people having a good time soon brought more people seeking to have a good time.

Starbuck grabbed a bottle of the best ambrosia in the place and hunched down in the darkest, loneliest corner he could find. Using the door of a locker for a screen, he embarked upon some serious thinking. Apollo never did anything without a reason. Therefore, there must have been a reason for all those stupid moves Apollo had made at the pyramid table. But none of those moves had made any sense. Yet Apollo had won almost every hand. That circle of illogic deserved a drink.

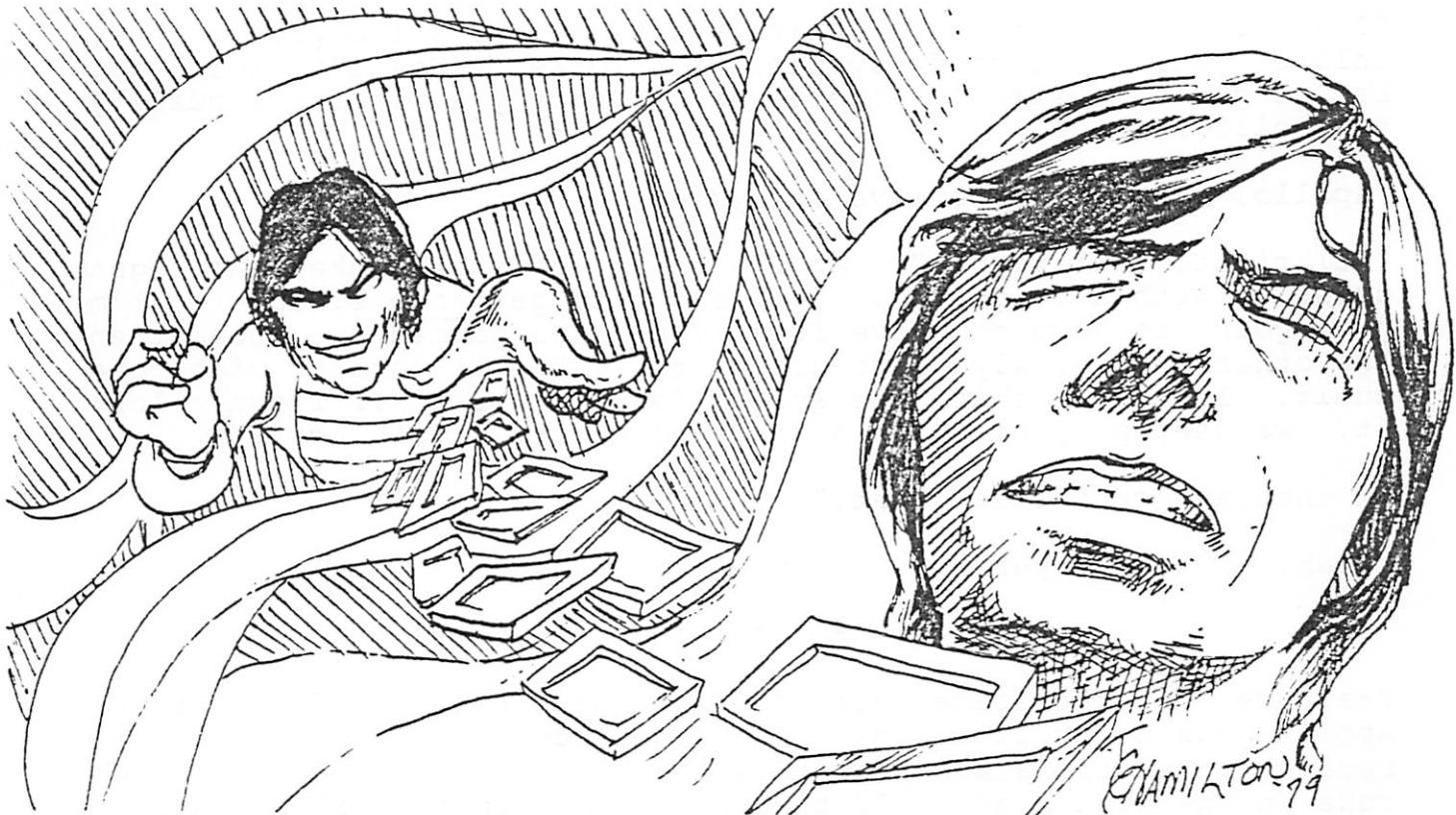
His serious thinking must have taken longer -- and required far more ambrosia -- than Starbuck had counted on. When they began to clean up after their good time, Blue Squadron found Starbuck curled in a ball around an ambrosia bottle, mumbling something about gambling and Apollo, and cubits, and money being the root of all Cylon machines. They were very gentle when they poured Starbuck into bed.

He awoke in a cold sweat, his uniform drenched. Uniform? How in Hades did he end up in his bunk in his uniform? Then he remembered that he didn't remember getting into his bunk...

The dream that awakened him had really been something. Great heaps of cubits floating past him, just out of his reach, directly to Apollo. How in Hades had Apollo done it? That nightmare was the last straw. He was going to find out right now how Apollo had won so much.

Starbuck jumped down from his bunk and cursed vociferously but quietly at the turbo roaring in his head. It was a good thing he didn't have to bend down to find his boots; the guys had been thoughtful enough to leave them on. Starbuck did a painful imitation of tip-toeing out of the quarters, and all but screamed when the light from the corridor hit his eyes. The only reason he didn't scream was that it would have hurt his head too much. He made his way most gently to Apollo's quarters.

Apollo was not pleased to have someone demanding entrance in the middle of his sleep period. He'd had too full a day, what with a patrol, a spell at the gaming tables, and a squadron fracas -- and far, far too much ambrosia -- to appreciate a nocturnal



guest. When it was Starbuck who appeared to his hoarse "Come," Apollo could cheerfully have used the laser that lay just next to his bed.

"What in the twelve worlds are you doing here at this unspeakable centar? And what in Hades have you been doing in that uniform?"

"Sleeping." Starbuck answered Apollo's second question first. "Apollo, you've got to tell me. I can't stand it. I'm even dreaming about it. Tell me."

Apollo sat up in bed and pushed the hair out of his eyes. "Tell you what, Starbuck?"

"Tell me how you did all the wrong things at the pyramid table and walked out of the RISING STAR with enough cubits to throw a bash. Explain it to me. Now. Please?"

"Starbuck, I've had less than three centars sleep, and enough ambrosia to get a Nomen drunk, and you want to talk to me about pyramid? Do me a favour, and take a walk down a launch tube." Apollo wrapped himself in his blanket and pointedly put his back toward Starbuck.

"I tried that already. It's not much fun." Starbuck plunked himself on the edge of Apollo's bunk. "Apollo, please tell me. I'm not going to get any sleep until you do."

Apollo rolled over to face Starbuck. "I can see that I'm not going to get any sleep until I do, either. It's very simple, Starbuck. I have a system."

"You don't believe in systems. Come on, tell the truth."

"I am telling the truth. I have a system. It's foolproof. And, unlike your 'foolproof' systems, it works. Now I've told you. Let me get some sleep!" There was definitely a plaintive quality to Apollo's voice.

"Apollo, you don't believe in systems!"

"All right! All right!" Apollo threw off the blanket and began dressing with a vengeance. "I've got to get some sleep, so I'm just going to have to prove it to you." He jammed one foot, then the other, viciously into his boots. "We'll start with one cubit. If I lose that, the system doesn't work. If I don't lose it, we keep playing. Is a thousand cubits a fair test?

"A thousand cubits is great!"

"Yeah. So is a period's sleep."

\* \* \* \* \*

Starbuck had the same glazed look he'd had the first time. Apollo was doing it again. The single cubit they started with became an entire stack; just as they planned, the entire stack rode on the next hand. If they lost, they lost it all. Apollo folded with three-quarters of a pyramid, and Starbuck all but fainted.

"Why in Hades' hole didn't you hover with that? That's a tough hand to beat at any time!"

"The system says to fold, and we're playing the system, not your intuition. That's why."

Sure enough, the dealer's hand was better; sure enough, Starbuck's intuition would have boggled it.

During the next few centars, Starbuck gradually came to believe that Apollo really did have an unbeatable system. The stack of cubits grew and grew, until even Starbuck would have called it a night. Apollo kept at it, though, and the audience behind the two grew along with the stack of cubits. Apollo let the entire amount ride as he had done all evening, and when he won again, he left the gaming table.

"That's it, Starbuck. One thousand two hundred nine cubits. And I need some sleep."

"Sleep! Sleep? Who can think of sleep at a time like this? Do you realize that I have searched all over the universe for a system like this? Do you know what I can do with a system like this? I'll never be short of money again! I'll never have to fly another patrol! I can retire and spend my time raking in cubits! Apollo! You've got to tell me how you do it!"

Apollo headed for the shuttle bay with Starbuck yapping around him like a young daggit. Starbuck was begging and pleading and

calling on friendship and on all the Lords of Kobol to get the system, but Apollo walked straight onto the shuttle, turning an absolutely deaf ear. Starbuck kept pleading all the way to Apollo's door, but Apollo had not said one word since they left the gaming room. Now he turned toward Starbuck, and raised his hand for silence.

"I have something very important to say to you, Starbuck."

Starbuck finally shut his mouth, waiting with eager anticipation for Apollo's announcement.

"Good night!" Apollo disappeared through his door, and it shut behind him in a very positive manner.

Starbuck stood staring at the door. When it still hadn't opened some five centons later, he decided it wouldn't open again until the Captain had some sleep. Maybe sleep wasn't such a bad idea -- only Starbuck wasn't too sure he wanted to face more nightmares.

Bright and early the next morning, a very neat, clean, and proper looking lieutenant appeared at Apollo's door -- about four centars before Apollo was ready to see anyone.

"If that's Starbuck, go away!"

Never being one to take Apollo at his negative word, Starbuck sailed through the door, plopped himself comfortably on the edge of Apollo's bunk, and readied his remote for note-taking.

Apollo sat up. "And just what is it you're up to?"

"I'm all ready. Just give me an outline of how your system works."

"What are you going to do with it after I give it to you?"

"As soon as I can, I'm going to get over to the RISING STAR and win myself a bundle."

"All right, Starbuck. I'll give it to you..."

Starbuck's face lit up.

"...on one condition."

Starbuck's face fell. "What's the condition?"

"That you start with one cubit, and only one cubit. You do still have one cubit left from pay-day, don't you?"

"One cubit? That isn't enough to give your grandmother a thrill. What's the use of playing with one rotten cubit?"

Apollo reached for his pouch and dumped one thousand two hundred

nine cubits into Starbuck's lap. "That's the use of playing with 'one rotten cubit'. Is it a deal?"

"It's against my better judgment, but -- you've got a deal."

After carefully removing the cubits from Starbuck's reach, Apollo rose and began to dress. "I have an errand to run, and you're going with me. I'll tell you the details of the system as we go."

"Where are we going this time?"

"I'm about to deposit one thousand two hundred nine cubits in the contingency fund, and you are going to watch me do it."

"You can't give all that money away! At least, if you have to give it away, give it where it will do some good! Give it to me!"

Apollo glared.

When they reached the purser's office, Starbuck grabbed the Captain's arm. "I just can't go through with it, Apollo. I can't watch you give all that money away. It just isn't natural!"

"Wait here for me, then, and try to stay out of trouble."

It didn't take long for Apollo to explain to the purser that he wanted to make a small donation of one hundred cubits to the Fleet contingency fund. He had suddenly realized he'd better hold on to the rest. He had a distinct feeling that it wouldn't be long before he would have to bail Starbuck out of trouble -- again.

When Apollo emerged from the office a few centons later, he expected to find Starbuck waiting; but the lieutenant was nowhere in sight, and Apollo knew his guess had been right. He initiated a search pattern and found Starbuck outside Red Squadron's quarters, rounding up every cubit he could get his hands on. Apollo's eyes narrowed. He had intended to be easy on his friend, but if Starbuck intended to break the one-cubit rule, Apollo was going to make the lesson as harsh as possible. He retreated to the corridor in front of the purser's office to await Starbuck's return.

Starbuck came jauntily down the corridor a few centons later, looking as naive and innocent as Arcturus. Apollo knew that look, and it did not mean that Starbuck was behaving himself.

"Are you ready for the rest of the system?"

"All set."

Apollo gave Starbuck the rest of the computer's rules, with one minor variation. Not being the practiced fast-talker that Starbuck was, Apollo felt sure his friend would catch his wince as he

told the untruth; but apparently Starbuck was so engrossed in the system that he wasn't paying any attention to Apollo's tone of voice.

\* \* \* \* \*

When Starbuck took off for the RISING STAR, Apollo followed at a discreet distance. If Starbuck started with only one cubit as he had promised, Apollo would stop him before he lost too much. True to form, however, Starbuck laid all his cubits on the table when he began to play. Apollo melted into the thin early afternoon crowd, then made his way back to the GALACTICA to await Starbuck's return.

The time spent in the GALACTICA's shuttle bay seemed to drag. Apollo felt angry -- angry enough, in fact, to really give Starbuck a dressing down. He couldn't believe that his friend would really lie to him. The entire fabric of Apollo's friendship for Starbuck was beginning to unravel; and he didn't want to face that, not after everything else he'd lost. But he didn't actually have long to wait. Starbuck appeared less than a centar later.

"What's wrong, Starbuck?" There was a strange, angry glitter in Apollo's eyes. "I expected to meet a wealthy and happy man when you returned. You look miserable."

"Apollo, I don't feel so good. I lost everything." Starbuck added to himself that every guy in Red Squadron was going to be after his hide within a few centars.

"You lost what you started out with?"

"I sure did."

"Well, I certainly wouldn't want you to be out because of a system that I gave you." The angry glitter intensified. "I guess I'll just have to take it upon myself to reimburse your losses."

Starbuck visibly brightened. "You'd really do that for me, Apollo?"

"Of course, Starbuck. It'll be my pleasure to make up what you lost. Here!" Apollo pulled out one single, lonely, solo cubit, that winked dolefully in the corridor's diffuse lighting. "I believe you did promise to start with one cubit, didn't you?"

Starbuck stared at the proffered cubit. One! One rotten cubit! He turned on his heel and ran down the corridor, leaving Apollo standing there with the cubit in his outstretched hand.

Starbuck was well into his third drink by the time Apollo caught up with him in the Officers' Club. He was upset enough to ignore the Captain. Apollo was angry enough not to be ignored; he pulled up a chair.

"Really feel rotten, don't you?"

Starbuck nodded.

"You deserve it."

Starbuck nodded, then added, "Didn't we have this conversation once before?"

"Yes, we did, but it's still valid. Nothing's changed since then." Apollo's voice turned bitter -- bitter enough, in fact, that his tone penetrated even Starbuck's self-pity. "I saw how much money you laid on the gaming table. You agreed to start with only one cubit." His voice was suddenly very quiet, very cold. "You broke your word to me, Starbuck."

Starbuck's head snapped up. There was genuine surprise in his eyes when he stared at Apollo. He'd been so deep in his own problem of how to keep out of Red Squadron's way so as to keep his skin intact that Starbuck never considered how this mess would look from Apollo's viewpoint.

"Apollo, I, uh..." Starbuck's mouth opened and closed several times, but nothing came out. Words were not adequate to express his feelings. He owed Apollo so much. "Sorry" didn't cover the genuine remorse he was feeling.

There was a long silence. Apollo was seething with anger; yet at the same time, he wanted to comfort Starbuck the way he would comfort Boxey. And Starbuck, atypically, was scared; he didn't want to lose Apollo's friendship.

"Starbuck, how much did you really lose?"

Starbuck figured he'd be dead in the morning anyway; if Apollo didn't kill him, Red Squadron would. For once, he told the truth. "Just shy of nine hundred cubits."

Apollo thanked the Lords for the foresight that had made him hold on to most of his pyramid winnings.

"When are you supposed to pay off?"

Starbuck checked his chronometer. "In about fifty centons."

"Where?"

"At the triad courts. There's never anybody there at this centar."

Apollo thought for a centon, then asked, "Starbuck, did you learn anything this time?"

Starbuck screwed up his face in the way that denoted he was really thinking. "Yes, I have. You were right about Arcturus. You don't mess with 'family' or, for that matter, take advantage of

kids. Red Squadron ought to know better; but I guess I took advantage there, too. But that isn't the worst of it."

Starbuck couldn't look up and meet Apollo's eyes. If there was rejection there, he did not want to know it.

"The worst of it is that you're angry with me."

Apollo had to smile. It might take awhile, but Starbuck evidently was capable of learning. His anger quickly evaporating, Apollo felt he could now offer some comfort.

"I'll pay off Red Squadron for you, Starbuck, but you've got to give me your word -- and mean it this time -- that you won't get yourself into another scrape like this one."

"I don't ever want to go through another mess like this. Apollo, you have my word."

Apollo nodded, accepting Starbuck's word, and therefore accepting Starbuck. Then he signalled the barman. Both of them could use a drink and some time to settle down before facing Red Squadron.

About half a mug later, Starbuck looked up. "Say, Apollo, where'd you get that system?"

"From Dr. Wilker, who got it from his computer."

"You got it from the computer? Then anyone can go to Central Computer and become a whiz at pyramid?" There was a wicked gleam in Starbuck's eyes. Apparently he learned, but he wasn't above regressing. Somehow, Apollo found it comforting to know that Starbuck was Starbuck.

"I'm afraid not, Starbuck. Wilker included in his program an instruction that no one else is to get that system. Ever."

Starbuck looked crestfallen, but that quickly changed to puzzled. "Wait a micron! Apollo, how come that system worked for you, but not for me?"

That was the question Apollo had hoped Starbuck wouldn't ask. "Starbuck, from now on, I'm going to leave the deceptions to you. They're too hard on my nerves."

Starbuck started to laugh. It wasn't hard to guess what had happened. He laughed so hard that tears started. Wiping his eyes with the back of his hand, Starbuck said, "You know, buddy, I think I just learned something else. I feel about as green as Arcturus. I think I just learned what it's like to be star-bucked."

Finally regaining his composure, Starbuck leaned close to Apollo. "Okay, buddy. Now, about that system..."

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HAMPTON

## "Allies"

(By John Jones IX)

The Cylons may seem like one of the Eternal Verities. This is not so.

Once there were the People.

Karan (Legh) Urun slept badly, but couldn't blame it on his sleeping pad. It was the fault of the situation facing the People, rather a distant enemy on which to blame the kinks he felt in neck, legs, and tail when he woke up.

He was luckier (in a way) when he took a shower. He could blame the Technical Service teams at Sector Base for the fact that the water was lukewarm and definitely recycled, that the soap was rancid, and that the air blower didn't work at all.

Although in strict justice (and Urun was strict about justice, both with himself and with others), even the Technical Service teams were only the last link in a long chain. Sector Seven nominally had the resources of thirty-two planets to draw on, but twenty-one of these planets now held only Cylons. Getting support for any of the People's activities from the robots they'd created had been a hopeless cause for more than a century. Four more planets held more Cylons than People, and only the last seven could really be relied upon to support the Sector Fleet.

Even from those seven planets, there was less help than the Fleet needed. The really good teams in everything from ritual teaching to computer programming were being sucked up by the city chiefs or the landowners building their little enclaves. They were lost to the Sector Authority and the Fleet, and the Fleet was slowly crumbling like the Red Cliffs of Axondan. It wasn't just showers breaking down, either. It was computers wiping out their banks, drive fields going unstable, life support systems breaking down, ships vanishing, and crews dying.

Fortunately, the sunlamp set in the overhead still worked. As it blazed down on him, Urun felt the warmth seeping through his scales into the muscles underneath, baking away most of the kinks and some of his sour mood. He was feeling almost cheerful when the Action Alarm sounded.

He was out of the shower in one leap, snatching up the first garment he saw practically in mid-flight. In another leap he was out the cabin door, and was halfway to the bridge before he discovered that he'd snatched up a shirt which stopped well short of

his waist. He stopped to hastily knot it into a sort of breech-clout and arrived on the bridge looking more like a mystic than a scout captain.

None of the other three crew members paid any attention to this. They were all closed up at their stations, staring at the main screen. Urun stared too, when he saw what was there.

It was a Cylon ship, which was mildly surprising in itself. This uninhabited system was closed to the Cylons by one of those highly informal agreements between the People and their creations which the Cylons usually honored as long as it was in their interest to do so. Urun hadn't heard of anything which would make it worthwhile for the Cylons to come here.

Even if they had found something important in this system, they wouldn't have sent a ship like the one on the screen. She was a SEGA-class liner, one of the last ships to be built for the Cylons in the People's yards before the robots started designing and building their own. She had to be at least three hundred years old, and should have been in a museum on some Cylon world rather than cruising through the fringes of a star system fifty light-years from anywhere.

The liner certainly looked that old, with scars and patches all over her hull. There were also bulges in odd places, which Urun would have taken for weapons pods on a warship. But a SEGA couldn't be a warship; the last was out of service long before Cylons and People began arming against each other.

Except for this one.

"Shield up," Urun said. "Let's move in slowly and give them plenty of time to see us."

There was no real need to hurry. The Cylon ship was moving slowly and steering erratically. That would do as an excuse for approaching her, if they turned out to need one -- they thought the liner was damaged and needed assistance. Even if the Cylons were as quick on the firing button as both Cylons and People sometimes were these days, there was no danger. SHARER had only half her normal weapons power, but at some cost to her speed she could shield herself against any Cylon attack.

The liner grew steadily, and so did Urun's impression that she had no business existing at all, let alone being where she was. That ship was old even by the standards of a Cylon's operational period, let alone any biological lifetimes!

She was also bare of any sort of identification, although Urun thought he could see faint hints of an old number near the stern. He frowned, and saw Makra (Tsem) Dakal looking at him.

"Do you want me to try reading her?"

Urun considered this suggestion. Makra was on the ship's records as Second Technician, but she could also handle weapons and piloting if necessary. Still more important, she was a telepath. Unfortunately, she could make telepathic contact only by going into a trance which left her useless for anything else. Urun decided against leaving SHARER even temporarily short-handed.

"No. But run an emission scan on her, and then put it through the computer. There may be something about her we can learn that way."

"Maybe," grunted Chegash (Bron) Humo, the Weaponer. "If the computer hasn't..."

Whatever he'd been about to say about the computer was lost forever, as a disruptor bolt speared out from one of the liner's bulges. It struck the scout's shield, yielding the usual display of fireworks that looked so beautiful until you thought of how much hard radiation it represented.

"Chegash, take over!" Urun snapped, dropping into his command chair and hooking up his crash harness. Humo didn't need orders. All the Brons made it a point of pride to be better at a weapons board than anyone else, People or Cylon, and he was better than most.

A half-salvo of three missiles flashed out of SHARER's belly. Disruptor bolts caught them halfway to the liner, but their warheads detonated on command. A cloud of heavy radioactive particles expanded between the two ships, effectively jamming most of the detectors and sensors.

Before Urun could maneuver, four missiles from the liner came plowing through the cloud. They were moving slowly, and the radiation might have crippled their circuits, but they looked too powerful to be safe going off against the shield.

"Hit them!"

The shield went down; it held disruptor bolts both coming and going, and a shielded ship firing her disruptor would trap herself and kill her crew in a pit of hard radiation. SHARER's bow disruptor (the only one working) fired three times. Two of the missiles died quietly; the third detonated and took the last one with it. More radioactive particles spread across space.

So did more missiles from the Cylon ship, but SHARER was already leaping forward. The second enemy salvo came in a wide, sloppy pattern and wouldn't have hit anything smaller than an asteroid, but Humo picked off two missiles just to demonstrate his marksmanship. Then they were through the radioactivity, and his next bolt struck the Cylon ship's own shield.

This set of fireworks wasn't as spectacular, but it went on a good deal longer as Humo sensed the Cylon shield was weakening

and went to rapid fire. Then, suddenly, the enemy shield died, the Weaponer stopped shooting, and the fireworks were over. That didn't stop the last bolt from taking a chunk nearly as long as SHARER herself out of the Cylon's hull. Urun stiffened as he saw chunks of hull plating and assorted bits and pieces from inside erupt into space.

The rules and regulations governing combats between Cylon and People's ships were mostly what the Sector Authorities decided they were. Captains had been promoted for blowing Cylon ships into radioactive gas, or turned over to the Cylons for scratching their paint. It was impossible to be sure from one year to the next what would happen to you, and that was another reason why good crews often left the Fleet or went mad if they stayed in.

At least no one was going to accuse him of destroying this liner and the mystery she represented. The moment the Cylon's shield died, she started accelerating faster than Urun would have believed possible. Obviously neither time nor Humo's bolt had seriously damaged her engines. On the other hand, she wasn't giving off the characteristic emissions of a ship preparing for star drive, and in normal space SHARER's detectors could track her for quite a while as long as she kept running at top speed. They were far enough from the system's star to eliminate most of the natural radiation sources which might confuse sensors.

Makra was now cutting in all the analyzers and tuning them on to the expanding cloud of wreckage the liner left behind. After a moment she started, then turned to Urun with a skeptical look.

"Nai, I'm getting readings on frozen air and water from the wreckage."

"You're sure?"

"Yes, if the analyzers are reliable."

That was a rather large if, but the matter was still worth investigating. The Cylons neither breathed nor drank, and seldom bothered to environment-control their ships except for temperature. Air and water meant the liner had been transporting some sort of life forms, and life forms aboard any Cylon ship out here, let alone the fleeing relic...

The mystery had just deepened.

"Close on the wreckage," Urun said, unsnapping his harness. "Makra, stand by on the tractor beams, and keep analyzing the wreckage."

SHARER closed in on the drifting debris. Urun could only hope she was also closing in on at least the beginning of an answer to the mystery of the Cylon ship.

(To be continued.)

### "The GALACTICA Universe"

On 22 August 1979 a fifteen-year-old boy named Eddie jumped to his death from a bridge after telling police he was upset over ABC-TV's cancellation of BATTLESTAR GALACTICA. He apparently felt he couldn't live without his favourite television program. Of course, the boy had other problems -- a lot of them, by all accounts. But his parents blame BATTLESTAR GALACTICA for his death.

It may sound callous, but we suspect the parents were at least as much to blame for their son's death as any television series. Without going into detail, let us say simply that despondency over the cancellation of BATTLESTAR GALACTICA may well have been a factor in the boy's actions -- but only one factor among a great many. However, this tragic incident brings up a very important point.

BATTLESTAR GALACTICA is, after all, only a television series. It is certainly not something worth dying for. And it is certainly not the entire world -- although, in a sense, it is a "universe". The GALACTICA universe is just as real as (or no more real than) the STAR TREK universe, the STAR WARS universe, the universe of Tolkein's LORD OF THE RINGS, or any other such science fiction/fantasy realm devised and developed by its creator(s). We all know that. Don't we?

Well, what about the universe of BATTLESTAR GALACTICA? Every episode of the television series, every film, every story, every tiny bit of material adds to that universe. We, in our own small way, are making contributions to it.

And what happens to it next? We still don't know. There are any number of conflicting reports. Production of several GALACTICA specials is under way; all sets have been struck. The entire cast has signed contracts for several specials; several members of the cast have refused to sign the contracts. Supposedly a second GALACTICA film has been (or is being) prepared, which may (or may not) be released overseas (or in the United States); this film is (perhaps) a composite of "Fire in Space" and "The Living Legend" -- or maybe "The Gun on Ice Planet Zero". Security, it seems, is still so tight that no one knows much of anything for sure.

Why? Try writing to Universal for an answer. If you receive the same treatment as we have to date, you won't even get the courtesy of a reply.

We do know one thing for certain. MCA has acquired the first season of BATTLESTAR GALACTICA for syndication to local television stations; the package is to consist of twelve two-hour episodes. We suggest you contact the programming directors of

your local television stations for more information on this. If they have not yet obtained the GALACTICA package for broadcast, write to them and urge them to do so.

In the Chicago television area, contact:

Mr. Harry Trigg  
WGN-TV (Channel 9)  
2501 West Bradley Place  
Chicago, Illinois 60618

Mr. Doug Knight  
WFLD-TV (Channel 32)  
300 North State Street  
Chicago, Illinois 60610

Mr. Peter Strand  
WSNS-TV (Channel 44)  
430 West Grant Place  
Chicago, Illinois 60614

As a final note, the editors of "Purple and Orange" wish to apologize for not being able to include the story of "purple and orange squadrons" in this Windycon VI issue. We know we said we would try -- and try we did. Unfortunately, the story got quite out of hand! But it will definitely be in our fourth issue, along with a great deal of other equally good fiction and art. And, of course, Part II of "Allies", a new GALACTICA-related SF serial by the well-known Chicago science fiction/fantasy author "John Jones IX". We're really delighted -- and extremely proud -- to have it.

We hope, too, to be able to provide some more definite information from Universal and the networks.

Watch for us!

--- Joy Harrison  
Senior Editor

\* \* \* \* \*

"Eddie: A Message from the Real World"

You've met Eddie. He was probably the brightest kid in class -- and therefore, as always, the loneliest. "The psychiatrist said he was just kind of bored with life, that there was nothing here for him to excel in. There was no real challenge here on this Earth," said Eddie's father. So Eddie rejected mundane Earth as

it rejected him, and lived where heroes wrestle with the stars and where an intelligent, sensitive young human can live without pain.

Some refugees enlist on the ENTERPRISE, some join the Rebellion; Eddie selected the GALACTICA. His room housed the necessary paraphernalia to isolate him from the outside world: tape recordings, posters, models of his Colonial heroes, their equipment, and their foes. When the outsiders cancelled BATTLESTAR GALACTICA, it only proved what Eddie already knew, so he rejected his home planet a second, terrible time.

As I said, you've met Eddie. Maybe you've seen him in the mirror. So many of us who call ourselves science fiction fans share Eddie's desperate flight. The "mundanes" ruin everything. We're smarter than they are, damnit. We're better. We know more. We care more. They're just stupid, unimaginative blobs of inertia, and they'll never accomplish a damn thing, and the universe is going to hell because of their plain, simple, incomprehensible blindness!

So why do we run from them?

When I was Eddie's age, poster sellers earned millions with a simple-minded homily called "Desiderata". Buried in soft-focus philosophy lay one essential truth -- perhaps the most essential of all: "You have a right to be here."

The GALACTICA is not in outer space. She lives here on Earth with the people who created her. Everything we escape to, including our own imaginations, is part of Earth and is just as real as English Composition and network cancellations. Of course there is room for Eddie and his fantasies; how else could they have existed long enough for us to mourn their departure?

This would be a good time to start preaching. Where, I might ask, would the world be if everyone with Eddie's gifts abandoned this planet? How could the world progress without the leadership of those people it has the most trouble accommodating? What about Einstein and others like him?

But those questions are asked continuously, and their answers are as obvious as the full moon on a clear night. We have to face the real world, because we are the real world. Pain and frustration wait there in ambush, but so too does everything else. Answer instead these questions:

Who, knowing the dangers, will stand vigil on this shining planet -- our shining planet -- and wait for Eddie's heroes to achieve their quest? Who will champion the heroes -- and the intelligent, sensitive young humans -- who are already here? And who will those heroes be?

You, there. Isn't this challenge enough?

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